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ABSTRACT

This paper advocates an integrated study of English rather than the traditional approach of studying language, literature, and composition. Its focus is not on designing an integrated curriculum, but on using this approach to develop reasoning skills for secondary students. One integrated curriculum program for the development of reasoning skills is a tenth grade unit entitled, The Inquiring Mind. The skills and concepts incorporated into this approach include the following: (1) connotation in literature is many times more significant than denotation, (2) drawing implications from literary selections is necessary to deal successfully with literature, (3) argument is that form of discourse which attempts to win assent to a belief or opinion, (4) deductive reasoning is one method of argumentation, (5) persuasion is that form of discourse which presents arguments as motives for some proposed action, (6) thought and language shape each other, and (7) language is symbolic. (Suggested learning activities for the unit are included.) (HOD)

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Developing Reasoning Skills Through An Integrated Curriculum Approach

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In the 1980 NCTE Publication entitled A Guide for Developing an English Curriculum for the Eighties, Allan Glatthorn defines an integrated unit as:

> a curriculum unit in which the concepts, skills, and objectives are drawn from two or more areas of a single discipline. The organizing theme of such a unit would be some general idea (such as "The Colonial Spirit") which links the several classes of concepts, skills, and objectives from the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and grammar. (1980, 74)

Glatthorn also points out that most leaders in the field of English curriculum strongly recommend such units and that they base their argument on the integrated nature of language. (1980, 75) Moffett and Wagner (1976, 42) argue for the integrated nature of language by stating:

> The environment for language learning must preserve the truth about language: as the main ingredient in our symbolic life it not only operates within every aspect of our lives but part of its very function is to integrate the diversity of experience into a harmonious whole.

The integrated curricululm also is an attempt to move away from the traditional tripod notion of English as the study of language, literature, and composition since this model offers a fragmented, decidedly nonunitary view of English teaching. English becomes compartmentalized into disconnected lessons, with some in literature, some in language, and some in composition.

My purpose today, however, is not to advocate the integrated study of English but rather to illustrate how one might use the integrated curriculum approach to develop reasoning skills for secondary students. In 1961, the Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association stated that the central purpose of American education is to teach American students to think. Professors Lazarus and Knudson included a section on reasoning in their 1967 book, Selected Objectives for the English Language Arts. During the seventies, however, little emphasis was given to the formal study of reasoning. A renewed call for thinking in the English curriculum is being made in the eighties, as exemplified by the report of the proceedings of the annual meeting

of the Association of American publishers which appeared in the January 30, 1985 issue of Education Week. In that meeting, Jane Christensen, associate executive director of the National Council of Teachers of English, told the publishers that English teachers want instructional materials that give students the opportunity to respond and that contain more higher-order thinking skills in texts (1985, 6).

To illustrate the development of reasoning skills through an integrated curriculum approach, I have chosen the unit title, The Inquiring Mind, for a tenth grade class. The skills and concepts incorporated into this approach include the following:

Literature: 1) Connotation in literature is many times more significant than denotation.

2) Drawing implications from literary selections is necessary to deal successfully with literature.

Composition: 1) Argument is that form of discourse which attempts to win assent to a belief or opinion.

2) Deductive reasoning is one method of argumentation.

3) Persuasion is that form of discourse which presents arguments as motives for some proposed action.

Language: 1) Thought and language shape each other.

2) Language is symbolic.

Activities

1. The initiating activity would be class consideration of a Peanuts cartoon in which Lucy is reading a book, closes it, and walks away stating, "I give up. There's no use trying. No matter how hard I try I can't read between the lines." The students would be asked to express their interpretation of Lucy's statements and their own degree of association with Lucy's feelings.
2. If reading is defined as a thinking process, the reader needs to

students have the information, they need practice in such activities as a) extracting and organizing meanings common to two or more statements, b) supplying meanings not stated precisely, c) speculating on what happened between events, d) anticipating what will happen next, and e) reasoning from cause to effect. The second activity, therefore, would be the distribution of the Shirley Jackson short story, "After You, My Dear Alphonse" and the reading of the first page only when Mrs. Wilson sees Boyd with his arms loaded with split kindling wood. At this point, the class would be asked to give its impression of Mrs. Wilson. (In practice, the vast majority of students see Mrs. Wilson as a typical mother only.) The class would then finish reading the entire story after which students would again be asked to give their impression of Mrs. Wilson. (In practice, the vast majority of students see Mrs. Wilson as "prejudiced.")

3. Students begin to work through Mrs. Wilson's thoughts (beliefs) and language:

   a) Mrs. Wilson turned to Johnny. "Johnny," she said, "what did you make Boyd do? What is that wood?" (slavery image)

   b) ". . . There's plenty of food for you to have all you want."

   c) ". . . Boyd will eat anything."

4. Students extend Mrs. Wilson's enthymemes into full categorical syllogisms:

   a) A member of a negro family is not a person who has all the food he wants.

      Boyd is a member of a negro family.

      Therefore, Boyd is not a person who has all the food he wants.

   b) Negroes are people who will eat anything.

      Boyd is a negro.

      Therefore, Boyd is a person who will eat anything.

5. Students and teacher work through the rules of deductive reasoning/ categorigal syllogisms.
6. Students role play extensions to the short story:
   a) Boyd goes home and his mother asks him about the day's activities.
   b) Mrs. Wilson's neighbor calls and Mrs. Wilson tells her about Boyd.

   The role playing is designed to evaluate student understanding of character development and story theme.

   Additional activities include use of pictures illustrating Boyd and Mrs. Wilson twenty years later and the students improvise the conversation; use of the lyrics from "You've Got To Be Taught To Hate and Fear" from the musical South Pacific and an analysis of the assumptions underlying the lyrics.
7. Copies of The Declaration of Independence are distributed to students for analysis with the context of the times (The Age of Reason) shared by the teacher. Teacher and students work through The Declaration of Independence leading to an understanding that the document is structured by the categorical syllogism expanded by points added to prove the major or minor premises (epichireme), and its blending of logic and rhetoric.
8. Using an opaque projector, the teacher projects only the caption for the Wind Song Perfume ad, "I can't seem to forget you. Your Wind Song stays on my mind." Three pictures of men's faces are projected over the caption, one at a time. Two of the pictures are of older men to contrast with the young, handsome man used in the ad. Students select the picture they want for the caption and share their reasons for the choice. This activity should allow for examination of some possible faulty generalizations generated about people at differing stages of life and of age. A general discussion of persuasion and persuasive

techniques through visual and verbal expressions should ensue.

The Wind Song Activity leads to a variety of student activities;

a) Resolved: Advertising nowadays is too dishonest.
Debate: To persuade an audience with a promise of joy-pleasure is to deal with them as selfish people; it suggests that the persuader does not respect them as reasonable disciplined individuals who are capable of selflessness and altruism;

b) The class is divided into groups and given a product. Each group devises strategies to persuade an audience to buy the product.

c) Students select from a number of speeches (e.g. Martin Luther King, John F. Kennedy, etc.) and they summarize what is said and describe the apparent purposes of the speaker.

d) Students develop deductive arguments to prove such generalizations as the following:

Schools should be open twelve months each year.

Television is good for viewers.

e) Students write critiques of editorials and/or letters to the editor.

10. A culminating activity has the teacher prepare different episodes from To Kill a Mockingbird to be used by students a) to discuss how the episodes would be reported by different characters and b) to rewrite passages from a different perspective. The criteria for evaluation of student work are the skills and concepts designed for this integrated curriculum approach to the teaching of English.

One criticism of education is that teachers do not challenge students to move to higher levels of thinking. In her book Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice, Hilda Taba wrote:

> If. . . formulations are presented to the student ready-made, his own perceptions have nothing to do with what is included or omitted from the reservoir of the past. There is no way for him to give meaning to these formulations. He is unaware of the thought forms in terms of which that knowledge is organized. His mind cannot make them his own, use them to form other ideas, and integrate them into a system of generalizations he already has. It is the experience of inquiring,

> reflecting, relating, and generalizing that is important, not whether ideas and facts that are used for the material come from the past or from the current experience. . . . Teaching for creative and productive thinking must help the student in the reasonable restructuring and reorientation which enables him to see problems, events, and ideas in a new perspective (1962, 116-117).

Developing reasoning skills through an integrated curriculum approach may be one way that English teachers can put into operational terms the concepts put forward by Hilda Taba some years ago, but which are taking on renewed meaning for today's classrooms.

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